FN1401 (Reviewed Nov. 2026)

Face the Facts about Sports Nutrition



Status

Athletes reach optimal performance by training and eating a variety of foods.

Info

Increased physical activity increases some of your food needs. Your body requires more energy and water. Food that is eaten before and between events can affect your ability to perform at your best level.

Eat a meal two to four hours before an event. A pregame meal fuels your muscles and body. Have foods rich in carbohydrate, with moderate amounts of protein, limited fat and plenty of fluids (especially water).

The pregame meal is important because it does the following:

- Fuels the muscles and body
- Helps prevent low blood sugar
- Helps settle the stomach
- Helps reduce chances of an injury, which sometimes is related to dehydration or an "empty fuel tank"
- Satisfies the mind with the knowledge of being well-fed while active
- Helps teens continue to grow and develop

Pregame Meals

Today

Quiz:

1. **How long before a game should you eat a pregame meal?**
   a. At least 30 minutes
   b. At least one hour
   c. At least two hours

2. **What is the most important goal of the pregame meal?**
   a. Preventing hunger during exercise
   b. Providing nutrients for exercise
   c. Eating lots of protein

3. **What should be the primary energy source in every athlete's meal?**
   a. Fat
   b. Protein
   c. Carbohydrates

4. **What is an example of a smart choice to eat to replenish glycogen in your muscles after activity?**
   a. Yogurt and ½ bagel
   b. Bag of chips
   c. Diet cola

5. **What food sources should be limited in the pregame meal?**
   a. Water and carbohydrates
   b. Fats
   c. Whole fruits and vegetables

Answers: 1-c, 2-b, 3-c, 4-a, 5-b

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Highly nutritious foods and fluids

Eating before physical activity gives you energy to burn. Some examples of healthful food choices are bananas, apples, peanuts, cereal, yogurt and fat-free milk. Eat a variety of foods to provide enough calories to meet your growth and development needs, too.

Groups

Grains, fruits, vegetables, protein foods

Focus on carbohydrate-rich foods when eating a pregame meal (and throughout the season). These foods are easily digested, which is a must when eating before an event. Only small amounts of fat and moderate amounts of protein should be consumed during the pregame meal. Fats are digested more slowly compared with other nutrients.

Applications

Score winning nutrition before the game.

Example: Pregame meal that you can eat on the road:

- 8 ounces fat-free milk
- 3 ounces turkey on whole-grain bread, with lettuce and tomato (and 1 teaspoon mayonnaise, optional)
- 1 cup grapes
- 1 banana

Nutrition profile: about 470 calories, 74 grams (g) carbohydrate, 32 g protein and 7 g fat

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What you eat after an intense event can affect your recovery. After competition, drink plenty of fluids to rehydrate your body.

Right after physical activity and two hours later, enjoy carbohydrate-rich foods and a small amount of protein. Carbohydrate-rich foods include breads, cereals, crackers, pretzels, fruits and vegetables. Protein sources include fat-free milk, mozzarella cheese cubes and peanut butter.



Nutrition throughout the training season.

How you eat on a regular basis matters! A nutritious pregame meal will not make up for a poor training diet. Your performance is affected by the foods and beverages consumed for days, even weeks, before an event – and your training!

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